

- health care professions
- education (both K-12 and higher education).
- human resources
- social work
- environmental/hazardous material management

Fast and Flexible

If the focus of your major is less important than the timing, consider a major that allows you to use your military experience (free electives) and credit-by-exams (CLEP, DSST, ECE, and TECEP exams). Associate of Science and Bachelor of Science degrees are often the most liberal when it comes to using your military experience and credit you earn through credit-by-exam programs.

Some majors are more flexible than others. That is, some majors allow you to transfer more credits from elsewhere (including credits you've earned from military service) than others. Liberal studies, general studies, and interdisciplinary majors tend to be more flexible than, say, a graphics design or a math major.

Degree Level

It is important to select the level of the degree you want to pursue, but it's not critical. Bear in mind that you don't have to have an associate's (lower level) degree before you go after your bachelor's.

However, it's probably a good idea to earn an associate's degree before you start working on a bachelor's degree. This is because life is uncertain and if, for some reason, you have to leave the Coast



Guard earlier than you'd planned, it'll be helpful if you can mark the "College Graduate" box on civilian job applications. In today's job market, this is very important.

Also, if you plan carefully, you'll likely be able to use all credits earned for your associate's degree toward your bachelor's degree.

Another option you should consider – especially if you're not sure what field you want to major in – is an undergraduate certificate program. The benefit of a certificate is that it lets you get your feet wet by taking courses in a field you think you're interested in (without having to take all the general education courses). Undergrad certificates usually require you to take about four or five courses.

The downside, of course, is that you can't say you're a college graduate after completing a certificate program.

Still, if you decide to get your degree in the field you got the certificate in, you'll be able to transfer the certificate courses to your associate's or bachelor's program and will have less far to go to complete either degree.

Much of the information in this brochure comes directly from the Education section of Military.com.



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Selecting the Right Degree and Major



USCG Training Center Cape May
We Train the Guardians of the Sea



Selecting the Right Degree and Major

Picking a degree and a major is a decision that can directly affect your future career opportunities and, ultimately, your success in whichever field you choose to go into.

When making this choice, there are a number of factors you should consider, including: your current career path, future job markets, timeline, and flexibility. Here are a few questions you should answer before you select a degree and a major:

- Do I want to continue on my present career path?
- Does my current career match the future job market?
- Do I want the quickest path to a degree, regardless of the major?
- Do I want a specific major or a major that leaves my options open?
- What level degree do I want: associate's, bachelor's, graduate, or professional degree?

Your major options are virtually unlimited. That is, you can get a degree in almost any subject. Some of these are extremely specialized, others are more general in nature. Examples of some majors are:

- Engineering
- Electronics
- Health care or medical
- Computer science
- Criminal justice
- Business administration
- Liberal or general studies
- Education
- Social services

These particular majors relate directly to white-collar jobs available in the United States today. However, by no means are you limited to just these majors. That is, you don't have to choose a major that's related to the career field you eventually want to work in.

In addition to there being many other majors, within these are many very specific areas of concentration.

If you know what kind of work you want to do once you leave the Coast Guard, and you know you want a degree related to that work, deciding on a major will be a relatively simple process.

If you're not sure which field you'd like to work in, your CDA and ESO can offer you one or more skill and/or interest assessments. These will help you make a career choice that matches your skills and interests and focus on the career options that match your experience, skills, and personal interests.

Your Current Career

If you plan to work in the civilian career field that's related to your current rate, you simply need to figure out which major coincides most closely with the knowledge, skills, and abilities you use in that rate. Since most of your military experience can be translated into college credit, this option can also help you get your degree faster.

But the speed with which you get your degree should not be the only factor you consider when choosing a degree and major. You may be an MK in the Coast Guard, yet have no interest in continuing in civilian fields related to the knowledge, skills, and abilities you've acquired as an MK.

Whichever degree and major you choose, you should be interested in the subjects you'll study. You'll use the knowledge you acquire in those courses on the job for many years. You *don't* want to end up dreading having to go to work because the subject matter doesn't interest you.

Information on different career fields and majors is available through many sources, including your education office and school admissions counselors. A really good resource is the U.S. Department of Labor's *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, which you can look at online at <http://www.bls.gov/oco/home.htm>.

Future Career Opportunities

Although factoring future job growth into your major choice may mean taking more courses (which in turn will increase your time and expense), it is well worth the effort. In fact combining your personal interests with the forecasted job market is a sure way to make the most of your education benefits.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor the future top career fields include:

- computer engineering
- computer network management and support

